

# National Conservation Lands Arizona Three-Year Strategy 2013-2015



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**



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## **Introduction**

The National Landscape Conservation System (National Conservation Lands) is part of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and its larger National System of Public Lands. In Arizona, the National Conservation Lands are found in five National Monuments, three National Conservation Areas, 47 Wilderness areas, two Wilderness Study Areas, and portions of two National Historic Trails and one National Scenic Trail.

This Arizona Three-Year Strategy builds upon the earlier Arizona National Landscape Conservation System Strategy and identifies State-Level Actions that contribute to the accomplishment of the Themes and Goals of the BLM 15-Year Strategy for the National Conservation Lands. The State Strategic Approach within each Theme communicates Arizona's overall intent for that Theme. The Arizona Three-Year Strategy connects national emphasis with state action and focus. It will be updated as actions are completed and when new priorities and actions are identified. The strategy is a means for carrying out the decisions made through BLM land use plans and local plans and does not change or replace those plans.

Managers of each national monument and national conservation area and managers in districts or field offices containing other National Conservation Lands are encouraged to develop individual unit or district/field office step-down strategies. These strategies will provide additional detail on how, when, and where specific actions will be taken as a way of achieving the Goals and accomplishing the broader Actions within the Themes of the national and state strategies. Unit or district/field office step-down strategies will contain immediate actions to be taken within one to three years in those units or district/field offices. These field-level strategies will be developed through a collaborative process that invites participation of friends groups, stakeholders, community leaders, and local organizations and individuals. Through this process, the BLM and its partners can work together to identify what actions are needed and how they can be completed with the assistance of interested volunteers.

Information on the National Conservation Lands in Arizona may be found at [www.blm.gov/az](http://www.blm.gov/az)

## **Theme 1: Ensuring the Conservation, Protection, and Restoration of National Conservation Lands Values**

### **National Emphasis:**

- Policy Development
- Science
- Data Management

### **State Strategic Approach:** Management actions and projects are conducted to:

- Conserve, protect, and restore the conservation values (monument objects/natural and heritage resources) that are clearly identified for the National Conservation Lands in Arizona.
- Place emphasis on resources at risk, such as threatened and endangered species, wildlife movement corridors and habitat connectivity, water quantity and quality, and other exceptional natural and heritage resources in Arizona.
- Consider direction given in other Arizona Strategies.

**Goal 1A:** Clearly communicate that the conservation, protection, and restoration of National Conservation Lands values is the highest priority in National Conservation Lands planning and management, consistent with the designating legislation or proclamation.

### State Level Actions:

1. Develop a clear description of the monument objects for each national monument and the natural and heritage resources for each national conservation area, each national scenic or historic trail, and the Arizona wilderness system as a whole.
2. Emphasize that conserving, protecting, and restoring monument objects and natural and heritage resources of National Conservation Lands areas are budget, planning, and project implementation priorities.
3. Prioritize conservation of monument objects and natural and heritage resources in developing alternatives for the environmental analysis of planning and project implementation.
4. Assign BLM staff points-of-contact for the identified monument objects and natural and heritage resources on the National Conservation Lands.
5. Work with friends groups, interpretive associations, and other partners to provide interpretation and public education about conserving, protecting, and restoring monument objects and natural and heritage resources of National Conservation Lands for the benefit of current and future generations.

6. Maintain current serialized case files for each National Conservation Lands unit to include legislation, boundary maps and legal descriptions, and other important documents.

**Goal 1B:** Expand understanding of the National Conservation Lands values through assessment, inventory and monitoring.

State Level Actions:

1. Acquire baseline and ongoing inventory information for monument objects and natural and heritage resources on National Conservation Lands. Identify additional critical resources, unique values, and sensitive areas. Use GIS tools to document and store information.
2. Conduct regular monitoring of identified monument objects and natural and heritage resources to track trends and changes in resource conditions.
3. Assess conditions using inventory and monitoring information, and in conjunction with Arizona Land Health Standards, Secretarial Order 3308 (Management of the National Landscape Conservation System), land use plan decisions, appropriate strategy goals and actions, and applicable BLM manuals and policies, develop effective actions that conserve, restore, and protect monument objects and natural and heritage resources.
4. Evaluate resource management plans for consistency with Secretarial Order 3308 and BLM manuals for National Conservation Lands. Conduct plan maintenance as needed to provide for consistency with National Conservation Lands guidance.
5. Continue wilderness character monitoring according to the interagency protocol for existing designated Wilderness areas.
6. Prepare periodic reports that provide information about conditions of monument objects and natural and heritage resources.

**Goal 1C:** Provide a scientific foundation for decision-making.

State Level Actions:

1. Support and promote scientific research activities that inform effective decision-making.
2. Develop a science plan that identifies needed research and its management use for each national monument and national conservation area.
3. Consistently use established inventory, monitoring, and assessment protocols that can be replicated and utilize that information to make science-based decisions.
4. Utilize current inventory and monitoring data and scientific knowledge to assess management situations, resolve potential conflicts, and evaluate resource management plans and implementation plans.
5. Work with a variety of partners, including academic, local community, and friends groups, to develop and conduct scientific activities and report on the information that is obtained.

**Goal 1D:** Use the National Conservation Lands as an outdoor laboratory and demonstration center for new and innovative management and business processes that aid in the conservation, protection, and restoration of National Conservation Lands areas.

State Level Actions:

1. Conduct projects to remove and eradicate, where possible, designated invasive species from all National Conservation Lands areas in Arizona.
2. Establish joint partnerships to conceive, develop and conduct innovative management activities that conserve, protect, and restore National Conservation Lands.
3. Develop and compile best management practices for conserving, protecting, and restoring the National Conservation Lands and disseminate to district managers for regular staff briefings and management consideration across the National System of Public Lands.
4. Use the National Conservation Lands Communications Plan to highlight the utility of the National Conservation Lands as an outdoor laboratory and demonstration center for innovative management and business processes.

**Goal 1E:** Limit discretionary uses to those compatible with the conservation, protection and restoration of the values for which National Conservation Lands were designated.

State Level Actions:

1. Ensure that any allowed uses and activities are conducted in a manner that protects the monument objects and natural and heritage resources for which the Conservation Lands were designated and that Secretarial Order 3308 and BLM Manual 6100 guide all decisions related to such uses.
2. Conduct patrols to provide resource protection and visitor contact, particularly during times of increased activity.
3. Establish and publish supplemental rules to clearly communicate limited and prohibited uses. Develop and disseminate materials that educate visitors about appropriate conduct.
4. Develop and implement Travel Management Plans.
5. Expedite applicable permits that reflect goals of National Conservation Lands.

## **Theme 2: Collaboratively Managing the National Conservation Lands as Part of the Larger Landscape**

### **National Emphasis:**

- Ecosystem-based Management
- Conservation Values in Planning
- Share Collaboration Stories
- Community Based Recreation

### **State Strategic Approach:**

- Distinguish the role and context of the National Conservation Lands as part of the larger National System of Public Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.
- Identify a cohesive regional approach to developing local projects by coordinating with regional partners.
- Promote shared stewardship concepts and seek public involvement.
- Recognize valid existing rights and provide for compatible uses.

**Goal 2A:** Emphasize an ecosystem-based approach to manage the National Conservation Lands in the context of the surrounding landscape.

#### State Level Actions:

1. Incorporate Rapid Eco-regional Assessments, where applicable, into planning and implementation decision-making processes for National Conservation Lands management.
2. Work collaboratively with all stakeholders and non-traditional partners to promote and develop an ecosystem-based approach to resource management on National Conservation Lands.
3. Assess and manage the natural and heritage resources of National Conservation Lands considering the setting of adjoining lands and the larger landscape.

**Goal 2B:** Adopt a cross-jurisdictional, community-based approach to landscape-level conservation planning and management.

#### State Level Actions:

1. Establish and continue cooperative efforts to gather resource information and manage and restore landscapes with multi-entity participation in projects. Examples include, but are not limited to: Mojave Desert Initiative, Gila Watershed Partnership, Upper San Pedro Partnership, and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.
2. Develop plans and implementation projects on an ecosystem and interdisciplinary basis involving adjacent land managers and owners.

3. Continue to build partnerships with local communities to provide consistent management of bordering lands.
4. Acquire inholdings within National Conservation Lands from willing sellers.
5. Create partnerships to involve multi-jurisdictional agencies, organizations and interests. Engage the Arizona Resource Advisory Council for assistance in establishing cross-jurisdictional and community-based partnerships.
6. Inform other land management agencies of National Conservation Lands strategic goals and explore developing mutually beneficial goals and actions.

**Goal 2C:** Work with tribes, state agencies, and local communities to identify and protect lands that are critical to the long-term ecological sustainability of the landscape.

State Level Actions:

1. Encourage tribal relationships and involvement across all National Conservation Lands within Arizona. Facilitate traditional tribal uses of resources, including native seed collection and planting to the extent possible.
2. Work with transportation agencies to provide uniform signage for National Conservation Lands.
3. Partner with federal, state, local, and tribal governments, universities, and other entities and organizations to develop projects that address ecological sustainability of landscapes associated with the National Conservation Lands.
4. Develop agreements with state, local, and tribal governments to address management of National Conservation Lands and adjacent lands having shared interests.

**Goal 2D:** Adopt a community-based approach to recreation and visitor services delivery, consistent with the conservation purpose of the National Conservation Lands and the socio-economic goals of the local community.

State Level Actions:

1. Provide visitors to National Conservation Lands with current and accurate information through partnerships with gateway communities, local governments and local businesses.
2. Improve recreational access for visitors, including trail development, issuing special recreation permits to local businesses, and other appropriate practices when consistent with National Conservation Lands purposes and with protecting national monument objects and other identified resources of National Conservation Lands.
3. Develop, maintain and nurture sustainable travel and tourism partnerships within gateway communities to ensure accurate and beneficial marketing of National Conservation Lands recreation opportunities.
4. Encourage local communities to establish and foster programs, such as Take It Outside, that grow youth interest in the outdoors and make use of National Conservation Lands.

## **Theme 3: Raising Awareness of the Value and Benefits of the BLM's National Conservation Lands**

### **National Emphasis:**

- Communication and Outreach
- Volunteer, Partnership, and Education Strategies
- Veteran Engagement and Employment
- Youth Engagement and Employment

### **State Strategic Approach:**

- Associate with and participate in annual events and special activities to strengthen community connections and showcase conservation system values to the local communities.
- Establish Gateway Community Information Spaces for each national monument, national conservation area, and national scenic or historic trail and for wilderness areas on a regional basis.
- Build upon programs that engage youth, veterans, and service organizations in activities on National Conservation Lands.

**Goal 3A:** Launch a long-term public awareness initiative about BLM Arizona's National Conservation Lands, including national and local outreach, communications, and media plans.

### **State Level Actions:**

1. Coordinate and expand National Conservation Lands websites, brochures, maps and other outreach materials to ensure consistency in messages and content.
2. Use established formats and templates for signage and publications to provide a strong and consistent visual identity for the National Conservation Lands.
3. Develop a communications plan that builds upon the national plan to showcase National Conservation Lands in Arizona using tools including social media, podcasts, story banks, virtual visitor centers, photo galleries, on-site activities and volunteer projects.
4. Develop education and outreach materials to help the public understand use requirements and limitations that may be needed to provide for sustainable use.
5. Develop publicly accessible web-based libraries of all planning, management, and research materials for each unit.
6. Establish outreach programs with educational institutions and local communities to communicate successes and research and applied science opportunities.

**Goal 3B:** Advance and strengthen partnerships to facilitate shared stewardship and to advance the relevance of the National Conservation Lands to communities of interest and place.

State Level Actions:

1. Assess capacity for partner and community involvement in National Conservation Lands areas.
2. Encourage community-based partnerships and visitor infrastructure in gateway communities to assist with economic development in the gateway communities while conserving and preserving the natural and heritage resources of National Conservation Lands.
3. Work with the Conservation Lands Foundation, local communities, and others to establish a Friends Group for each national monument and national conservation area and to enlist stewards for wilderness areas and national scenic and historic trails.
4. Pursue training for partners and BLM staff to best utilize agreements, various funding opportunities, record-keeping, and reporting.
5. Ensure BLM materials on National Conservation Lands are available in local schools, libraries, community centers, and relevant businesses.

**Goal 3C:** Expand use of volunteers within the National Conservation Lands.

State Level Actions:

1. Sponsor youth volunteer projects on national monuments and national conservation areas and within field offices for wilderness areas and national scenic and historic trails. Projects and youth organizations will reflect local resources and funding or sponsorship opportunities.
2. Recognize volunteer accomplishments through awards nominations, news articles, social media, and other means.
3. Utilize annual events and celebrations as times to organize volunteer activities.
4. Work closely with Friends groups to set up volunteer activities that help accomplish National Conservation Lands protection, conservation, and restoration projects.

**Goal 3D:** Engage the public in stewardship of the National Conservation Lands through education and interpretation.

State Level Actions:

1. Establish gateway community partnerships through agreements with non-profit organizations to provide information spaces, staffing, and visitor services for National Conservation Lands areas. Provide consistent information delivery.
2. Enable and encourage Friends groups to build recognition and community support for National Conservation Lands stewardship by engaging the public through education and interpretation programs.

3. Use established outdoor ethics and stewardship principles, such as *Tread Lightly!*, *Stay The Trail*, and *Leave No Trace*, in education and interpretation materials and presentations.
4. Develop education, interpretation, and outreach programs and materials to explain landscape health issues, special values, and protection strategies, and showcase management successes within the National Conservation Lands.

**Goal 3E:** Recruit and retain well-trained youth from diverse backgrounds for entry-level careers, and engage youth in recreation, education, and stewardship on conservation lands.

State Level Actions:

1. Use annual community events and special activities for outreach and presentations on employment, environmental education, and community service opportunities.
2. Emphasize **youth employment opportunities** on the National Conservation Lands units. Focus on nurturing students and youth toward seeking permanent careers in natural resources management. Early exposure to environmental education concepts and experiences encourages students to pursue academic training and employment in the natural resources. Include partnerships with tribes to develop employment opportunities.
  - a. Pursue and invite academic internships (those required for graduation in a specific program at high schools, colleges, and universities). Where practicable, each national monument and national conservation area should provide for an academic internship each year.
  - b. Work with local schools and universities to attend job fairs to inform students of BLM and National Conservation Lands hiring opportunities.
  - c. Each District will plan to sponsor at least one project a year on National Conservation Lands units employing Youth Corps, Student Conservation Association, or other internship employees. These may be funded through various sources such as Challenge Cost Share, Southern Arizona Project, or other programs.
  - d. Each District will plan to hire a minimum of one student yearly. Students will be hired in career tracks that relate to the needs of the National Conservation Lands units and National System of Public Lands within the District.
  - e. Each District will pursue agreements with local schools and universities to hire through specialized, focus programs, such as Metro Tech in Phoenix.
3. Engage youth in appreciation of the natural environment through both formal and informal **environmental education** settings. Include the use of family-oriented programs, as well as school, American Indian, and youth group programs. Use social networking and other current technologies to deliver messages and experiences. Programs that capture youth early can lead to future interest in careers in natural resource management. Tie into the “Take It Outside” initiative where opportunities exist.

- a. Expand *Hands on the Land* sites so that one site is tied to each national monument and national conservation area and, as appropriate, on other areas.
  - b. Develop and implement a consistent, state-wide, Arizona Junior Explorer Program for participation by all National Conservation Lands units. Adapt existing versions of the program as needed. Activities will focus on National Conservation Lands.
  - c. Initiate and expand elementary through high school programs and other youth group programs, outdoor classrooms, and camps.
  - d. Work with local school districts to include National Conservation Lands concepts into a learning unit involving resource problem solving and a field trip.
  - e. Establish partnerships with colleges or universities to provide field school and or youth camp opportunities on National Conservation Lands units.
  - f. Provide National Conservation Lands information for existing teacher education programs, such as Project Archaeology and other CEUs. Work with local universities and school districts to develop additional related curriculum.
  - g. Pilot a podcast on one National Conservation Lands unit for a unique visitor experience.
4. Utilize youth groups and individuals as a ready source of community-minded young citizens eager to provide **community service** and assistance in management of public lands. Seek out citizen-based family groups that organize recreation and outdoor opportunities on National Conservation Lands. Provide and expand on these opportunities to introduce youth to stewardship ethics and ownership in these special places.

## **Theme 4: BLM's Commitment to Conservation**

### **National Emphasis:**

- Internal Communication Plan
- Policy Coordination
- National and State Strategy Integration
- Budget Coordination

### **State Strategic Approach:**

- Utilize internal communications tools to provide information to all BLM employees about projects and management activities on National Conservation Lands areas.
- Provide opportunities to engage all BLM employees in management activities on National Conservation Lands areas.

**Goal 4A:** Improve internal communication and understanding of the National Conservation Lands and its potential to enhance the BLM as a whole.

#### State Level Actions:

1. Develop an Arizona statewide National Conservation Lands internal communications plan to address sharing information about the National Conservation Lands, their management, and their place within BLM.
2. Regularly prepare brief articles on projects, activities, and other work related to implementation of the conservation mission on National Conservation Lands units for publication as BLM Highlights, on The BLM Daily, or through other communications channels.
3. Share information about National Conservation Lands with other District and Field Office staff at Leadership Team and All Employee meetings and on weekly and monthly coordination and conference calls.
4. Distribute the Annual Manager's Report highlighting the year's accomplishments to all employees.
5. Include the National Conservation Lands as a topic in any new employee orientations and at pertinent program workshops.
6. Ensure all BLM employees in Arizona are familiar with policy direction for the National Conservation Lands, including Secretarial Order 3308, the national 15-year Strategy, and the BLM Manuals on National Conservation Lands. Provide training as needed.

**Goal 4B:** Cultivate shared responsibility for the National Conservation Lands conservation mandate as an integral part of BLM's multiple-use, sustained-yield mission.

## State Level Actions:

1. Develop annual work plans that use staff that normally work throughout the National System of Public Lands in the Districts to implement projects on National Conservation Lands. Utilize National Conservation Lands staff for project work on the National System of Public Lands throughout the District.
2. Invite BLM employees to serve on details on National Conservation Lands staffs.
3. Through coordination with other programs, ensure that new or revised policy is consistent with National Conservation Lands policy. Implement policies consistently.
4. Coordinate across all BLM programs to leverage resources (e.g. volunteers, partners, stakeholders, time, funding, staff hours, equipment, etc.).

**Goal 4C:** Clearly define, understand, and justify staffing needs, and administratively organize the National Conservation Lands areas to operate as a cross-cutting program within the BLM.

## State Level Actions:

1. Ensure that a designated lead is assigned for each component of the National Conservation Lands in the state office with duties that include: budget development and execution, policy implementation, and field staff support. One person may serve as lead for multiple components.
2. Assess and implement staffing options to match the management needs of the different National Conservation Lands areas.
3. Provide orientation and training to newly-hired or newly-assigned staff having duties on National Conservation Lands to assure a clear understanding of the purpose and mission of those lands.
4. Encourage a working environment in District and Field Offices that allows for sharing staff, equipment, and related resources to accomplish mutual goals on the National Conservation Lands and the broader National System of Public Lands.

**Goal 4D:** Ensure the National Conservation Lands budget is coordinated with the other BLM programs. Set clear expectations and procedures for interdisciplinary budget development, priority setting, and reporting of accomplishments.

## State Level Actions:

1. Maintain an up-to-date Implementation Plan for each national monument and national conservation area based on the approved RMP. The Implementation Plan will serve as the basis for interdisciplinary budget development.
2. Develop projects that leverage available funding from partners and that are eligible for cost-sharing programs.
3. Seek opportunities to apply for funding from grants and initiatives to accomplish National Conservation Lands goals and projects.
4. Monitor and report on National Conservation Lands budget implementation and accomplishments regularly throughout each Fiscal Year.